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Bygone Industries
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Cochineal

II. The human being likes a colorful world. Sometimes the coloring, be it paint, chalk, lime etc. is used to protect the material, stains of all types are used to embellish his clothes. This coloring is obtained from a lot of sources. In black he may use soot from the chimney. For blue (azure) he would grind certain type of stones or material to a powder and by mixing it with a liquid, (water, oil, alcohol) he obtains the blue he needs. For different colors he would use different substances. When the Spanish arrived in Aruba and later the Dutch they used to cut down the Brazil (HAEMATOPHYLLON BRASILETTO) tree. From the bark the red coloring was obtained by cutting slivers of the bark and leaching this in water or alcohol. By evaporation an extract was obtained and this coloring base used to prepare certain types of paints in different shades (or hues). But the trees became rare and nobody bothered to reforest. Then another source was obtained. The cochineal tick, (COCCUS-CACTI) when full grown, gives off a reddish dye. For this purpose it is set out on the NOPAL CACTUS (NOPALEA COCHENILLE FER DACTYLOPIUS) also called the COCCUS-NIPAL CACTUS or the OPUNTIA COCCINELLIFERA. Also known as French Pickle. The tiny tick eats on the cactus and matures. Then it is picked and slightly sundried. One pound (1 lbs) of ticks holds about 70.000 ticks. From this leached in alcohol a dye is obtained called Cochineal Red. Nowadays used only in laboratories. In Aruba the cochineal was introduced around 1835 / 1837. Whole government plantations including Socotoro, Companashi, Mon Plaisir, Sividivi, Canashito, Quevarco in Sabaneta and Sabana Grandi in Sta. Cruz. In Nort around Shaba, Cunuco Abao, Poz Abao; also in Tank Flip, Tanki Leendert; Ponton and Boca Raton. the work was very exhaustive and soon the aloe would crowd it out. Especially when the Aniline (dye) was discovered in 1857 in Germany. By 1867 it disappeared. In Sabana Grandi there are six ruins of tombs belonging to a Dutch family called Strakbein that used to grow this product. Ironically, in this work the catashi or loki-loki plant had its only use. From this leaf a "cartucho" or "peperheishi" was formed and pinned to the Cactus-leaf with a thorn from the cactus. (LEMAIREDCEREUS GRISEUS). The official name for the Catashi or loki-loki is PHYLLANTHUS BOTRYANTHUS. This conical-shaped cartucho was to protect the tick against the hot sun and the steady breeze. Also against rain. Needless to say, during the time cochineal was "farmed" many families had an income and a steady job.

Watapana

The watapana-tree officially is called CAESALPINIA CORIARIA. Nowadays people erroneously call it DIVIDIVI. There are many types or species. Aruba has only two; one a big tree, the other one a brush. The WATAPANA originally was called and still known as GUATAPANA in Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America,

Pods contain Tannic acid and gallic acid. The Indians used to call the pods dividivi. Under this name it was brought on the market in Caracas, to be shipped to Spain.

Today the real local name is being forgotten.

The Watapana grows almost anywhere on the island and the dried leaves are much sought after for enriching the soil.

So important was this tree in the 19th century and unto 1920, that there was a severe penalty for those who cut a single tree.

On lease grounds it was even worse. You needed a special permit by the Lt. Governor to cut one and you better have a very good reason to get such a permit.

Twice and in good rainy years 3 times the tree will bear.

The tree was cared for as to be free from beetles and weevils, for these pests would ruin a harvest. The gathering of the pods (balina's) was the job for women and children.

The fruits had to be ripe or the tannin production was off.

The Watapana meanwhile has become the official tree of Aruba and was so decreed by the by the Aruba Parliament.

It is no coincidence that wherever you see aloes the watapana is also seen. Both formed a means of income for the countryside during more than a century.

GOLD

The noble metal known as gold has had humanity in its grip ever since the dawn of history and has the tendency to affect mankind as no other item since creation. It will bring the greed out of the best person.

Most discoveries were made chasing gold or searching for it.

It is no miracle that people want to interpret the name of Aruba as associated with gold. Oro Hubo; there was gold is a daily expression. More as a wish than as a fact.

Two hundred years after the Spanish decreed Aruba to be a useless island (Isla inutil) where no gold exists, the Dutch sent out Paulus Prinz to investigate. That was in 1725 to 1727. For two whole years he searched and bored and turned every stone upside-down. He did find some signs of gold, silver and other metals. He did not find phosphate and has been sitting on top of the very hill that was later to produce and still holds large amounts of phosphate. Although he was not satisfied, his principals in Netherlands decided to call the investigation off. Paulus Prinz was enthusiastic.

In 1824 while herding sheep a young man of 12 called Willem Rasmijn found gold suggests at Lagabay in the dry creek (arroyo-rooy) of Rooy Fluit in upper Santa Cruz. A few weeks later an indian girl found gold in the Rooy at Daimari. And the gold fever hit everybody and the rush was on. People start combing the dry creeks looking for gold. As the news reached the fine ears of the Government, the Lt. Governor advised the Governor of Curacao of the findings. And with great hustle the Governor Cantzlaar in person, with secretary and a captain / engineer with a commander and one sargent, two corporals and twenty men. (troops); Also two oxen were shipped to Aruba. The Governor was to stay one week.

month. He was later to require 50 soldiers from Netherlands to guard of the fields. However it must be understood that the gold found in the dry creeks was alluvial gold. Later on the gold in quartzrock was to be mined. But in the first instance only the beds of the arroyo's were attacked. It was too simple. All there was needed: a small sieve and two large recipients, usually made out of wood. The clay or sand, sometimes a loamy earth, was thoroughly turned over and beaten to reduce the sizes to the absolute smallest unit, and poured from one recipient into the other. The heavy breeze took care of the lighter parts. This process was repeated until only the coarser pieces were left. Then the material went through the sieve, sometimes with some help of water, that was poured over the matter. The clay or loam dissolved completely leaving the heavier, coarser pieces. Finally this was washed completely and put to dry. Any small particles of gold would be readily seen and taken. This process was repeated again and again. With half of the population looking for gold it is a matter of time for trouble to start. Fights were frequent and there are some cases reported that the police had to bring fighting ladies to the station. To eliminate the problems, a permit was required. Such a permit exacted a fee so that the Government got its share. Around 1827 all goldhunting was prohibited. But during the period March 1824 and August 1824 a total of 12 kilograms was gathered. This the official figure. There is a reason to believe that the amount was much greater. By December 1824 the total rose to 50 kilograms. End August 1825 the ship Amstel took to Holland a total of 71.139 kilogram. One fact is certain: The Museum of Natural History in Leiden was completely restored with the product of the goldhunting in Aruba. In July 1828 a detachment totalling 13 soldiers and two fieldcannons were sent to Aruba to strengthen the existing "army". Gold was found from the most western tip of the island, at the foot of Hudishibana, eastward at Tibushi, Hadicurari, Anabuy, Cubeyu, continuing in the eastern direction up to Paraboste east of Santa Cruz and west of Dos Playa. Of course the rooy's around Yamanota, Arikok, Shete, Lacon, Daimari and Boca Keto.

In 1824 a new system was used. The whole area was divided into 1534 parcels or lots and every parcel exacted a yearly fee of Fls. 15.00 and 1/3 of the value found. Soon smuggling of gold began. The Western part was the first to be mined for the goldbearing-ore. But again, only the "pockets" were worked. This was to go on until 1854 when gold hunting was prohibited. One L.J. de Jongh of the Hague got a concession to explore and exploit goldbearing quartz-rock for forty years. In 1866 the concession was voided. But in December 1867 I. Isola got a concession for a yearly fee of Fls. 2500,=. He sold the concession to Ricket and Co. of New York in 1868, who sold it in 1872 to the Aruba Island Goldmining Co. Ltd. of London for 251.509,- pounds. This company worked the mines of Cero Plat and Cristalberg and vicinity. This company worked steadily until 1880, but sold her rights to the Aruba Agency Company Ltd. in London. The method used was the mercury process. The quartz was crushed, ground, heated and amalgamated with mercury. The mercury vapor was evaporated to obtain the gold residue. The new Company

began to use the potassium cyanide process, that produced about double the production of the mercury method. In 1899 a new concession was granted for the duration of forty years to the Aruba Gold Concessions Ltd. of London against a flat yearly fee of Fls. 3750,= and 25% of the netto gain over 6% of the capital involved. This new Company bought out the Aruba Agency Co. Ltd. of London. They built the new gold extracting plant (smelter) at Balashi while they worked the mines of Miralamar. They also had an auxiliary field for surveyors and laboratory work. The ore mined at Miralamar was brought to Balashi by railroad. This company worked until 1908 and the Aruba Goud Maatschappij took it over. In 1916 the smelter closed, forced by the 1st worldwar. In 1946 a new Company was formed, but without any success.

Phosphate

As already seen the presence of Paulus Prinz on an investigation during 1725/1727 on the very site where phosphate was to be found, showed signs of metals, but not phosphate. It is not very clear when phosphate was first discovered. Some say that in 1874 J.H. Waters Gravenhorst found phosphate. However, in April 1859 S.R. Kimball of the Philadelphia Guano Company asked for the necessary permission. Nevertheless the exploitation of the guano is not feasible until a company is formed with Aruba, Curazolenan and British capital. But a legal fight in Dutch courts retards the exploitation. The Aruba Island Gold Mining Co. of London, bought the mining concession of I. Isola. This permit given in 1867 had a duration of 25 years. The new holders claimed exclusive rights on all mining. The court in 1877 decides that those rights were valid only for metal bearing ore and not for other material. Finally in 1879 the Government gave a concession to Ch. B. Sewell of London, who acted in combination with the Aruba Island Gold Mining Co. In December 1879 the Aruba Phosphate Maatschappij (APM) was founded who bought the interests of Ch. B. Sewell. Early 1880 the excavations took place. Meanwhile the necessary equipment arrived. A steel wharf was installed to accommodate large ships. A railroad was laid, so the transportation for bigscale operations was made possible. Ships with a 500 ton capacity could be loaded in a period of twenty-four hours. In fact the San Nicolas Harbour was the best fitted throughout the Caribbean during many years. The A.P.M. was successful. By 1884, four years after its start, the borrowed capital of Fls. 84000,= plus interest could be paid. The total of Fls. 9.000.000,= in products was shipped between 1880 and 1914. The revenue reached Fls. 4.000.000,= during the same period. This on an initial investment of Fls. 112.000,=. When converting the money-value to our presentday guildervalue, the gains for the Dutch Caribbean Islands, known as the Curacao Colony is obvious. Fact is that between 1852 and 1895 the Netherlands did not have to subsidize the Caribbean Colony. Aruba produced enough to support the territory and even to pay for the deficit of many years in the past. About 400 men had steady work. The early mining took place around the Bank Giron, now called Bank Jerome; Poz di Colebra and Cero Colebra. By 1890 however the mining started at the Cero Colorado. The use of dinamite made deeper shafts possible in

contrast to the early goldmines. But as with everything everywhere, the 1st world war; the discoveries of rich phosphate deposits in Florida, U.S.A.; in Tunisia and Algeria; forced the company to close down. After the war the worldwide economic crisis made reopening impossible. The mines were closed in august 1914.

The Consequences

The discovery of gold and phosphate and the subsequent mining on large scale made a lasting impression on Aruba. Economically, physically and spiritually. A small island with a limited population; with very little prime materials and a very vulnerable agrarian system must undergo a huge change by the economic impact. The mining activities forced people to live near the job. So, many, small communities rose with the mining. Paradera, Ayo, Marawiel, Matavidiri and others near the gold-mining activities at Bushiribana, the western end Tanki Leendert, Boroncona, Alto Vista, Calabas, Cudawecha etc. In Santa Cruz; Angochi, Sombre, Sta. Lucia, Sabanilla Abao, Laga Bena to name a few. All because of the goldmining. The Phosphate concern made San Nicolas and enlarged Sabaneta, although the gold industry created Balashi, Sabana Basora, Poz Chikito and Burundundo. We can safely state that these industries gave Aruba a facelifting. The old adobe houses or hut all but disappeared. New stone buildings with tile roofs arose all over the island. Wells were dug everywhere. Better clothing, household items were purchased. Helped by the law (of 1867) on land distribution, the property fever came into being. The tradition that every young men should build his own house before marriage was bombarded to such limits as to be considered a unwritten law. It is also around this time that many churches were built or rebuilt and that the education in the parishes took a big stride. But Aruba was not a paradise and shortly after the closing of the gold and phosphate mining activities, poverty hit the island. Again the hardworking, liberty-loving Aruban looked for solutions to his problems. So Watapana-gathering reached its limits. Sheep-dung and bones were collected and sold. Wool from the many sheep was obtained and brought on the market. And finally, with the chips down emigration was started. Cuba was the destination. To the Aruban male, practically born with a machete in his hands, cane-cutting was a picnic. The Panama-hat were never made in Panama, but in Aruba. We even had a school at Savaneta and Nort to teach the proper methods.